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**The Kirov Association
Designer of Soviet Battle Tanks-
Prospects for the 1990s**

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A Research Paper

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The Kirov Association: Designer of Soviet Battle Tanks--
Prospects for the 1990s

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Key Judgments

Information available as of 1 September 1984 was used in this report.

Soviet battle tanks are designed by one organization in the USSR--a group that we call the Kirov Association. It probably consists of a tank design institute and a production tooling design organization, both in Gorelovo, a tank prototype production plant in Leningrad, and as many as four facilities located elsewhere that develop and test tank components. In addition, the Kirov Association is building a modern tank plant in Gorelovo to assemble new tank prototypes. When finished, around 1987, the new plant will take over from the Leningrad plant. This construction indicates a continued Soviet commitment to tank development that can be expected to extend well into the next century.

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The Kirov Association designs one new tank model at a time. It can modernize at least two existing tank models simultaneously, however, in addition to its new tank model design. After it has designed and tested a tank prototype in Gorelovo, Kirov coordinates series production of the tank with whichever of the four plants will manufacture it-- Nizhniy Tagil, Khar'kov, Omsk, or Chelyabinsk. When a prototype's design has been completed and transferred to a manufacturing plant for series production, Kirov is available to initiate another new model design.

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About 12 or 13 years is needed at present to develop a new battle tank in the USSR--roughly six or seven years to bring it through full-scale engineering development at Gorelovo and another five or six years to convert it into a series production model at a manufacturing plant. It took about five years to design the T-72 tank; but some tanks, for instance the new gas-turbined, missile-firing T-80, have taken longer to develop because their subsystems failed frequently during development. Kirov required eight years to design the T-80, and another six years was needed to get it into series production.

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We believe that the Kirov Association is well along in designing its new main battle tank of the 1990s. Military requirements to develop this tank--which may have a small

SECRET

Page 1

SECRET

25X1

turret or be turretless--were probably issued to the Kirov Association about 1980. Kirov probably has a full-scale mockup or a prototype assembled in 1984, but we are not sure whether it has obtained final approval of its design from the Soviet military. Should the design be approved any time soon, we would expect the Kirov Association to begin prototype production in 1985. Subsequent testing done on schedule at a manufacturing plant such as Nizhniy Tagil would normally lead to series production and deployment of the new tank in the early 1990s.

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Page 2

Page Denied

Next 15 Page(s) In Document Denied

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